

The Rich Man, the Poor Man and the Way the Pelandok Squared the Score.*

The story is told that once on a time there was an extremely wealthy merchant who lived in his house in the country at his ease eating and drinking every day. Now quite close to his garden there was the house of two people, husband and wife. One day the wife of the poor man was chattering with a friend of the merchant, when she said,

"Whenever anything is cooked in the merchant's house, whether it is fried or baked or stewed or broiled, then and then only do I eat. For whenever I smell anything being fried or baked or stewed or broiled in the merchant's house I eat with a good appetite. That is how I happen to be so plump, through eating thus. Whenever I want to eat I always make it a practice to wait till there is a smell of cooking in the merchant's house. Then I eat." The merchant's friend told him all that the poor woman had said. As soon as the rich man and his wife heard this, the rich man exclaimed.

"Of course that is why we never get stout. It seems that all the flavour of our frying and baking and stewing and broiling is quite devoured by these two poor people." The rich man was very angry indeed with the poor man and cursed and abused him up hill and down dale finally demanding that the poor man and his wife should pay the price of anything that had ever been cooked in his house. He went off and complained to the raja of the country and sued for all his expenses in frying and baking and stewing and broiling on the ground that the flavour thereof had been devoured by the poor man and his wife. The raja summoned the poor man and his wife before him. When he made enquiries the poor man replied,

* This tale told by Penghulu Haji Mohamed Nasir bin Kanda Mat Sen of Hutan Melintang, who first learnt it from one Pawang Talip bin Mohamed of Menangkabau.

"Of a truth Your Highness, thy slave sups whenever there is a smell of cooking in the merchant's house."

The king came to the conclusion that he was unable to give a decision and so he ordered the gong to be beaten throughout the whole country and a proclamation to be made.

"Ho, whoever gentle or lord, can decide the plaint that the merchant prefers against this poor man will be made the vizier of the land."

But no man replied to the proclamation. At last the pelandok said to the herald. "Oh herald, what is troubling the king of the country? Where are his enemies breaking in? Which of his soldiers has committed murder? Where is the wall of the royal fort that is in need of repair?"

"None of these. But a certain merchant has made complaint to the king, and the king has caused proclamation to be made that whoever will decide the plaint of the rich man against these two poor people, husband and wife, will be made the grand vizier of the land."

"Pray thee, inform the king that I will settle the case."

"Very well, Salam di Rimba, come along with me to the king."

When they reached the royal hall the king said to the herald. "Have you found any one who can settle the question of right and wrong between the merchant and the poor man?"

The herald made obeisance and replied, "May I be pardoned a thousandfold, Salam di Rimba hath declared that he can give judgment in the case between the rich man and the poor man, O my lord."

The king said, "Is it true that Salam di Rimba hath said that he can give judgment in the merchant's case?"

The pelandok made obeisance and replied, "With the help of your highness' aid, your servant will give judgment between the merchant and the poor man."

"If you are not able to, I will kill you forthwith."

"If I am slain thy servant will die and my lord will be one slave the poorer."

"Give judgment quickly."

The pelandok then went up on to the judgment seat and the merchant and the poor man were called and placed before him. The pelandok enquired of the rich man. "How much of your money has been devoured by the poor man?" The merchant replied, "Full a thousand dollars hath thy servant lost." The pelandok then asked the poor man "Is it true that you eat whenever there is any smell of frying or baking or stewing or boiling in the merchant's house?" The poor man replied, "Of a truth thy servant eats whenever there is cooking in the merchant's house, for the smell of the cooking reached thy servant's nostrils." The pelandok then enquired, "Have you ever gone into the merchant's house?" "Never." "Have you ever gone into his garden?" "Never." The pelandok then enquired of the merchant, "It is true, sir, that the poor man has never been inside your garden?" The merchant replied, "It is true." The pelandok then went to the king and borrowed a thousand dollars. He gave orders that the state curtain should be placed in the middle of the hall and arranged between the merchant and the poor man. He then called out in his shrill voice and ordered the poor man to count out the thousand dollars on one side of the curtain and the merchant to listen very carefully on the other. So the poor man told the dollars thus, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,....." When he completed the tale of the thousand, the pelandok said, "Take, sir, herewith a full and complete settlement of your account." The merchant said, "Very well, bring the dollars to me." The pelandok said, "Why sir, do you want the very dollars? You have received your account and it is all settled. The

poor man took them away by smelling and you have received them back by hearing."

Such is the tale of the pelandok's skill.

Sa'orang saudagar dengan sa'orang miskin.

Sekali pĕrĕstua adalah kapada satu masa konon ada sa'orang saudagar tĕrlalu amat kaya dudok didalam satu kampung dĕngan bĕrsuka-suka'an makan minum pada tiap-tiap hari, ada dĕkat dĕngan kampongnya itu sabuah rumah miskin dudok dua laki bini. Maka pada satu hari pĕrĕmpuan si miskin itu bĕrchakap-chakap dĕngan sa'orang dĕripada tĕman saudagar itu, katanya, "Aku makan ini manakala tuan saudagar itu, bĕrmasakan rĕndang tumis mĕnggulai patai baharu aku mĕmakan, dapat mĕnchium bahu sĕgala rĕndang tumis gulai patai tuan saudagar itu, kuatlah aku mĕmakan, jadi sĕbab itu gĕmok sudah aku mĕmakan ini. Bagitulah adat aku makan, pada tiap-tiap kali hendak makan, nanti bĕrbahu rĕndang tumis tuan saudagar baharu makan." Maka pĕrkata'an si miskin itu dikhabarkan oleh tĕman saudagar itu pada tuannya saudagar sĕpĕrti kata pĕrĕmpuan si miskin itu. Dĕmi sahaja tĕrdĕngar pada saudagar laki istri, pĕrkhabaran itu bĕrkatalah datoh saudagar itu, "Patutlah salama-lama ini aku dua laki istri tiada gĕmok. Rupanya sĕgala bahu-bahuan rĕndang tumis aku habis dimakan si miskin dua laki bini itu." Maka datoh saudagar pun marah akan si miskin kata nustanya dĕngan kinchah hamon sĕranahnya sĕrta mĕminta harga rĕndang tumis gulai patai ia yang sudah-sudah itu pada si miskin dua laki bini itu. Lalu saudagar itu mĕngadu pada raja didalam nĕgĕri itu, minta harga bĕlanja rĕndang tumis gulai patai yang sudah itu, sĕbab bahu dimakan si miskin dua laki bini itu.

Maka dipanggil rajalah si miskin dua laki bini itu. Dipĕrĕksa, dijawab oleh si miskin, "Bĕtul tuanku patek aiap*

* Wilkinson p.63 gives Aiapan, victuals prepared for a Raja. In Perak santap is used to describe the royal food, and aiap is the word used by a subject when speaking to a raja of his (the subject's) food, as here.

waktu tengah berbahu rendang tumis datoh saudagar ini tuanku." Maka bĕrfikir raja itu tiada lalu ia hĕndka mĕhukumkan, lalu raja itu mĕnyuroh mĕmukol chanang didalam nĕgĕri itu bĕrtanya. "Hoi, siapa-siapa, inche, tuan-tuan, yang chakap mĕhukumkan aduan saudagar diatas si miskin ini, dijadikan mĕntĕri didalam nĕgĕri ini." Maka sa'orang tiada siapa mĕnjawab chanang itu. Didalam itu bĕrtanya pĕlandok pada tukang chanang itu, katanya, "Hei tukang chanang, apa susah raja didalam nĕgĕri ini, dimana musoh mĕlanggar yang dabĕrtalon-talon, dan dimana hulubalang yang salah bunoh, dan dimana pagar kota raja yang pĕchah?" Dijawab tukang chanang. "Satu apa pun tiada, tĕtapi ada sa'orang saudagar didalam nĕgĕri ini, mĕngadu pada raja minta disĕ'iseikan pĕngaduannya, inilah raja pukul chanang chari siapa yang chakap mĕnyĕliseikan aduan saudagar diatas si miskin dua laki bini, di jadikan raja mĕntĕri didalam nĕgĕri ini." Maka kata pĕlandok, "Maalumkan sĕmbah aku pada raja. Akulah yang chakap mĕnyĕliseikan pĕngaduan saudagar itu." Jawab tukang chanang, "Baikiah Salam di Rimba, mari bĕrsama-sama mĕngadap." Kata pĕlandok, Baiklah? "Maka sampai kabalai rong, titah raja pada tukang chanang, "Adakah kamu dapat orang yang chakap mĕhukumkan salah bĕnar antara saudagar dĕngan si miskin ini?" Sĕmbah tukang chanang, "Harap diampun, inilah Salam di Rimba yang mĕngaku pada patek, ia boleh mĕhukumkan pĕngaduan saudagar diatas si miskin itu tuanku?" Maka titah raja, "Bĕnarkah, Salam di Rimba, bĕrchakap lalu mĕhukumkan aduan saudagar ini?" Maka sĕmbah pĕlandok, "Dĕngan tinggi daulat, pateklah mĕhukumkan diantars saudagar dĕngan si miskin itu tuanku." Titah raja, "Jika Salam di Rimba, tiada lalu mĕhukumkan sĕkarang aku bunoh." Sĕmbah pĕlandok, "Jika dibunoh patek mati, tuanku juga kakurangan hamba?" Titah raja, "Baik, hukumkan sĕgĕra."

Maka pĕlandok itu pun naik kaatas pĕtarakna. Saudagar dan si miskin pun dipanggil oranglah didudukkan dihadap pĕtĕrakna itu. Maka dipĕrĕksa pĕlandok, saudagar itu, "Bĕr-apa banyak sudah bĕlanja datoh saudagar yang sudah habis bahunya dimakan si miskin ini?" Jawab saudagar, "Ada saribu ringgit bĕlanja hamba sudah habis?" Maka dipĕrĕksa pula si

miskin itu, "Bětulkah kamu makan waktu tēngah bėrbahu masak rēndang tumis gulai patai datoh saudagar ini?" Jawab si miskin, "Bětul ada hamba makan tiap-tiap saudagar itu bėrmasak-masak, jadi bahu masak itu sampai pada hidong hamba." Dipėrėksa pėlاندок si miskin itu, "Adakah kamu masok didalam rumah saudagar itu?" Jawab si miskin, "Tiada." "Dan masok didalam kampung saudagar itu ada kah?" Jawab si miskin, "Tiada." Maka dipėrėksa pėlاندок pada saudagar, "Bětulkah datoh saudagar si miskin ini tiada pėrnah masok kampung tuan hamba?" Jawab saudagar, "Bětul." Maka pėlاندок pun mēngadap raja, mēmohunkan saribu ringgit dan mēnyuroh orang mėlabohkan tirai tiwangga ditēngah balai rong itu diantara saudagar dēngan si miskin itu. Maka ringgit saribu itu disuroh pėlاندок bilang pada si miskin, dēngan mēnyaring suaranya dēri balik tirai itu. Dan saugagar itu pun disurohnya mēndēngar baik-baik dēri balik tirai itu. Si miskin bėrbilang itu dēmikian bunyinya, "Satu dua tiga empat lima anam tujuh lapan sēmbilan sapuloh." Apabila sampai saribu bilangan ringgit itu kata pėlاندок, "Tėrima datoh saudagar dēngan jėlasnya." Maka di-jawab saudagar, "Baiklah bawa mari ringgit itu, hamba tėrima." Kata pėlандок, "Apa fasal pula datoh saudagar ini mahu itu ringgit? Sudah tėrima, sudahlah. Si miskin mēngambil pada datoh saudagar dahulu dēngan bahu sahaja. Dan datoh saudagar mēnėrima harganya ini dēngan bunyi." Inilah chėtėranya, kapandian pėlандок itu adanya.